

**Ankita Dhyani is a part of the Khelo India scheme. She trains at the SAI NCOE Bhopal.** The 18-year-old Uttarakhand girl made a NEW women's 5000m National U20 Record with a time of 16:21.19 at the 36th National Junior Athletics Championships at the Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati. Ankita broke Sunita Rani's U20 record of 16:21.59 set in 1997 in Italy.

She started running since 2015 when she participated in the National School Games. It was an U-14 competition. She won her first medal which was a gold at the Junior Nationals in 2017.

Her quotes:

### **After breaking the national record**

"I feel very happy on making the national record and hopefully this is an important step for me towards getting a medal for India in the Olympics. Now my aim is to perform well at the World Athletics U-20 Championships to be held in Kenya."

### **Life after joining SAI Bhopal**

"Every athlete gets a lot of support especially in terms of diet. When I was in my village in Uttarakhand, there was no ground in my district and I used to run in the road, but after moving to the SAI Bhopal centre, I found a proper ground to practice."

### **On choosing middle-distance and long-distance running**

"Various athletes have different interests and mine was in middle and long-distance running. I have a long way to go but in my journey so far, there has been lots of obstacles but the government has kept on duly supporting me.

### **On her struggles and overcoming them**

"There have been lot of struggles but I have overcome them. I used to travel alone for long distances and it was difficult for a girl but I used to travel despite this. It almost used to take me 8 hours to travel from my home to my first hostel in Rudraprayag, Uttarakhand in 2017. I never used to get proper transportation and going alone was difficult. However, my parents used to support me and used to ask me to keep going. My parents don't know much about athletics but they've always supported me and never stopped me from pursuing my dreams. They support my siblings also in the same way.

"Papa told me to pursue that what you have interest on. I plan to make them recognized all over India and the world through my achievements. I want to be a very big player and I hope my achievements do not make them bereft of anything in life and all the problems are sorted."

## **On the tragic incident in Uttarakhand**

“My house was far from the place of the incident so thankfully everything was fine for my family. I just want everyone in the region to be alert because you never know these things keep happening and please tread those areas with caution. I pray to God that the people of Uttarakhand don’t go through the same fate as calamities like this keep on happening.

**Prathibha Toppo:** Ankita’s coach for the last 2 years. She’s in SAI Bhopal from 2017.

## **Special thing about Ankita**

“Ankita has all the qualities an athlete should possess like height, weight, endurance, and everything is built genetically well. We have to make her more complete. Mentally, there’s always an up-down of athletes and we focus on that 120% because that can make or break during an event. There is always a fear but mentally you have to be stable during a competition. We focus on that with full emphasis for Ankita.

## **Advice for middle-distance and long-distance runners**

“Athletes should make a base according to their age. If the base is good, you will adjust to whatever training you do in the future. You should not hurry with your preparations else your performance will come down in 1 to 1.5 years. Emphasis should be given on endurance and mileage.

“Our nutritionist at SAI Bhopal takes care of weight management in the best way possible and tackles all the issues clearly. For long distance runners, there should be emphasis on fibre diet, fruits, boiled vegetables, juices.”